

Von dem Blümlin Vergissmeinnit

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‘VON DEM BLÜMLIN VERGISSMEINNIT.’

A MIDDLE-HIGH-GERMAN POEM.

Vom dem blümlin Vergissmeinnit is the title of a hitherto unpublished poem contained in the Add. MS. 24,946 of the British Museum (fol. 53 f.). This manuscript, which belongs to the fourteenth or early fifteenth century, has been sufficiently described by Baechtold, *Deutsche Handschriften aus dem Brit. Museum*, and R. Priebisch, *Deutsche Handschriften in England*, II (1901), p. 215 f.¹ The poem itself is immediately preceded in the MS. by 37 poems of the Teichner—an Austrian poet of the fourteenth century and author of a number of didactic poems—and is entered by the same hand as these. The same MS. also contains two of Peter Suchenwirt's poems, viz. *di schön abenteuer* (fol. 8) and *der widertail* (fol. 148), both of which are similar in nature to our poem and open in almost exactly the same way, i.e., with a description of the ‘maienzeit.’ Such openings are however characteristic of this period².

Vom dem blümlin Vergissmeinnit belongs to the class of poems generally known as *Sprüche* or *Spruchgedichte*, very common in Germany at that epoch. It bears a strong resemblance both in form and contents to a poem contained in the collection known as the *Liederbuch der Clara Hätzlerin* entitled *Von manigerlay plümlin* which treats of the symbolic meanings of flowers. But this similarity was almost inevitable in two poems of this type which treat of the same subject. The method of treatment varied little in the allegorical love poetry of the fifteenth century, and the descriptions had become so stereotyped that we meet on all hands such lines as:

gruenes gras was sin obdach.
gen der liechten sunnen prehen.
die vogel sungen in den esten. etc.

¹ Professor Priebisch first drew my attention to the poem and has also aided with his advice, especially in respect of the metre of the poem.

² Cf. K. Matthaei, *Das weltliche Klösterlein* (Dissert.), Marburg, 1907, p. 80.

Moreover, the subject treated was a favourite one and did not lend itself to great originality. From the earliest times flowers have been endowed by popular tradition with certain qualities, and during the middle ages it became a favourite practice to symbolize the quality by means of the flower. The same sort of symbolism was much in vogue with regard to colours, and it is difficult to say whether the colours¹ lent their symbolic qualities to the flowers or the flowers to the colours. There is a good deal to be said for the former of these two possibilities, as the poems which are earlier in date seem to refer more exclusively to the colour, whereas the later poems merely endow the flowers with the virtues of their respective colours. Thus ‘rot brynnnt in der lieb’ and ‘plau bedeutet stättikeit’ were common traditions before the rose had become the symbol of passionate love or the forget-me-not that of constancy.

As regards this latter flower and its suggestive name, there are many legends current in Germany which purport to account for its peculiar significance².

It is impossible to say with certainty when or where the name originated, but at all events it soon became very popular with the poets, and opinion was unanimous as to the qualities of the flower. These are summed up in a short prose treatise of the fifteenth century (cf. Grimm, *Altdeutsche Wälder*, I. 151) which runs as follows: ‘ein blumelin heisset Vergissmeinnit, dem das enpholen wirt, der magk woel frohlichs muts sin; der iss von ime selbe dregt, der wiele [=wolle] sins liebs nit vergessen zu keiner zit.’ The flower itself cannot be identified with any degree of certainty. The early botanical dictionaries are not always in accord with each other and are far from being trustworthy. Grimm has identified the forget-me-not with the ‘Wunderblume’ or ‘Schlüsselblume,’ but this does not seem to have been the view of the older botanists. Lyte (*Histoire des Plantes*, 1557) gives ‘Schlüsselblume’ as the German equivalent for the ‘petit-bouillon,’ an entirely different flower. For ‘l’herbe au scorpion’ he gives the German ‘husenoore’ (=‘aureille de lieure’) which corresponds to the early Eng-

¹ Matthaei, *op. cit.*, pp. 27 f.

² Cf. Warnke, *Pflanzen in Sitte, Sage und Geschichte*; also Folkard, *Plantlore, Legend and Lyric*, which contain most of the ordinary legends. A less known one is to be found in Hoffmann von Fallersleben, *Horae Belgicae*, XII, p. 49, where, quoting from Frisch, *Wörterbuch*, I, p. 346, he says: ‘Ist eigentlich ein Kraut, dessen Blumenstengel oben in einem Schnecken Ring liegt, und viel Blüttnopfein hat, von denen alle Tage einige aufblühen, bis auch die Spitze gerade wird. Von welcher Blume einige in Scherz eine Application auf das Andenken der Freundschaft und der Liebe gemacht, welche immer neu aufblühen soll und deswegen einander diese Blume gezeigt, wovon ihr der Name Vergissmeinnicht geblieben ist.’

lish name 'mouse-ear scorpion grass' often applied to the ordinary forget-me-not (*Myosotis palustris*). Hieronymus Bock (1560) classifies the forget-me-not under 'gamander,' and gives as variants the names 'blomenderlin,' 'gamanderlin,' 'Weiberhelfft,' 'Frauenbiss,'... 'darumb dass das Kräutlein in der mitten seines Herzn beraubt ist | bluet auf beden seitten mit bloen blumlin | wie gauchheil...u.s.w.' (cf. *Kräuterbuch*, LXXV). Lonicerus (*Kräuterbuch*, 1560) informs us concerning the 'Vergissmeinnicht (item *frauenbiss, helfft*),' that 'die Wurzel angeneckt soll die Büler holdselig und werdt machen.'

But it was a more scientific age which transferred the virtues of the flower to the root and, in order to take account of the poetical significance of the flower, we must go back a century and a half, to a time when it formed one of the conventional themes of amorous conversation. For instance, in the German adaptation of an Italian work entitled *Pluemen der Tugend*, and composed in 1411 by Hans Vintler, we read (l. 8554 f.):

und mit frauen minnigleich
soll man reden von claiden reich
und von pluemen vergissmeinnitt
und von hübschen minne sitt, etc.

It is noticeable that no mention is made of the flower in the Italian original of this poem¹, and here let it be remarked that the forget-me-not plays but a slight rôle in the popular poetry of either France or England compared with that of Germany, where it seems to have laid hold of the popular imagination. In France, for instance, there is little proof of its popularity beyond an occasional reference². The same is true of England as may be seen from the fact that Coleridge, when he wrote 'the gentle gem, the sweet forget-me-not,' was obliged to add an explanatory note in his first edition as to what flower he referred to under this name—and this, although as early as 1532 the name appears in Palsgrave's Dictionary, where 'une fleur de ne m'oubliez-mie' is translated literally by 'a flour of forget-me-nat' (cf. Dewes, Introduction to Palsgrave, 'Eclaircissement de la langue française' 1582).

¹ 'Con donne si dei contare di cose di cortesia e di alegrezza e d'amore, e di belle gioje e di vestimenta, e di cose di masserizie.'

² Cf. for instance Charles d'Orleans, Rondeau LI:

Et a elle presenteray
Des fleurs de ne m'oubliez-mie.

Cf. also *Bibl. de l'École des Chartes*, 6^{ème} Série, I, p. 473 (16th c.): 'Ung autre dyamant taillé en fleur de ne m'oubliez mie.' The French name occurs also in a poem formerly attributed to Chaucer but which is of later date, viz. *The Assembly of Ladies*, 59 f.: 'And how they were accompanied with mo | Ne m'oublie-mies and sovenez also' (cf. Skeat's Ed. of Chaucer, VII, p. 69). But such examples are mere isolated ones and are far from being 'popular.'

In Germany, on the other hand, there is hardly a collection of popular songs but contains some evidence of its widespread popularity. Here, as mentioned above, it seems to have been the symbolic interpretation of the colour blue which first led to the adoption of this flower as a token of constancy. Instances abound of the veneration in which the colour blue was held¹—so much so that 'blautragen' (cf. Lassberg, *Liedersaal*, II, p. 178) became a synonym for being constant in love². Hence the importance of the 'blue flower,' so well suited for wreaths and garlands and much beloved of the poets³. Thus the way was paved for the advent of the 'Vergissmeinnicht,' and we find a mention of it already in a poem attributed to Hermann von Sachsenheim (cf. K. Geuter, *Studien zum Liederbuch der Klara Hätzlerin*) and entitled *Von einem Wurtzgarten* (ll. 78 f.):

Ich fand auch da in liechtem schein
Vergissmennit das blümlin
Des farb je scheint in stätikait
Verschwunden was all mein laid.

Henceforward one has only to study the different collections of German Volkslieder to have ample evidence of the popularity of this flower in poem and song. We find it in a Lower Rhenish MS. of the fifteenth century as one of the seven 'roeselein' which go to make up a symbolic wreath⁴, and again in the *Münchener Liederbuch*⁵ with a play on the words:

Ein plumlein heist vergissnichtmein
das ist mir durre worden
min lip das hat gedencknitmein
geflanczt yn yre hercze u.s.w.

It figures considerably in the poems contained in the *Ambraser Lieder-*

¹ Cf. 'Nun sag mir darnach was ist blaw | Ich sprach das ist stättigkait | der hertzen-lieb gen lieb treiti!' (*Liederbuch der Klara Hätzlerin*, No. 21); 'Plau bedeutet stättigkait' (*Ib.*, No. 19); 'di ain trug bla in staetigkait' (Suchensinn, *Der Widertail*), also *Ein Red von der Minne* by the same author where Frau Minne complains: 'das maniger plab durch staete trait | da von so went er staete sein,' and many others. For the symbolic meanings of the various colours cf. W. Gloth, *Das Spiel von den sieben Farben*. *Teutonia*, Heft 1, 1902.

² The idea of wearing colours probably originated in France. Cf. Christine de Pisan, *Œuvres poétiques*, 3, 298, 'bleu porter.' Cf. G. Paris, *Chansons du XVe siècle*, No. XLII: 'Et blanche livrée porter Chascun un blanc chapperon.' Cf. 'Il te fauldra de vert vestir | C'est la livrée aux amoureux,' *Ib.* XLIX, etc. Cf. also Raynaud, *Rondeaux et autres poésies du xv^e siècle*, Paris, 1889, Nos. 2, 37, etc.

³ Cf., for instance, a short poem of the fifteenth century preserved in a Karlsruher Handschrift (see Mones, *Anzeiger*, v, p. 334):

und wend ir hören, was mir daz liebste si,
daz pläwe plümlin das stat gar nach da bi,
daz pläwe tütet stät,
der küle wind hat mir den weg verwät, u.s.w.

Cf. *Liederbuch der Klara Hätzlerin*, II, pp. 96 f.: 'ain plawe plumen sy abprach,' and many others.

⁴ *Euphorion*, VIII (1901), p. 52.

⁵ Published in the *Zeitschrift für deutsche Phil.*, xv, p. 113.

buch (1582)¹ and amongst the sixteenth century poems contained in the *Deutscher Liederhort*². It finds a place in the allegorical poems dealing with love³; it is reckoned among the 'geistlichen Blumen' in a poem of the sixteenth century⁴, and in a Middle German paraphrase of the book of Job⁵ where, although the name is not mentioned, yet it is obvious that a reference is made to this flower.

But it is unnecessary to multiply examples⁶. Enough has been said to indicate the place which the 'Vergissmeinnicht' occupied in German lyric poetry of the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, and we now proceed to examine more in detail the poem of which the text is published below.

The metre of the poem is that of the majority of Spruchgedichte in the fifteenth century, viz. rhyme-pairs with regular alternation of dip and lift. The majority of lines present the customary four feet and, in the effort to obtain these, the natural accent has sometimes been violated; cf. *lieblich*, l. 18, *billich*, l. 100, cf. also lls. 21, 30, 72, 88, 120, 155. Several lines which appear at first sight to contain only three lifts in spite of their masculine ending can be brought into conformity with the rest by means of a very slight alteration in the text (cf. rhyme-pairs 41-42, 73-74, 133-134).

The question of the extent to which 'mehrsilbige Senkung' is allowed, is rendered difficult by the unreliability of the only text we possess of the poem. In many cases it can be avoided by the syncope of an *e*, more often than not in the prefix *ge-*.

44. Ich gdacht in meinem mut : nu schweig.

75. Gotwillkum gsell was schafstu hie ? etc.

Infinitives such as *singn*, *wanckn*, etc., are treated as monosyllabic, as is proved by the rhyme *paum : anschawn*, 71-72.

On the other hand omission of the dip between two lifts is not uncommon and may be due to a predilection of the poet for 'beschwerte Betonung,'

cf. 32. Mít der hánnd wás ich snéll.

35. Niémand mích dés erwént.

77. Und zuckt méinen hût áb.

cf. also 144 (or read *ferte* ?) and 145 (*hinefur* ?).

¹ Ed. J. Bergman, cc, 2; ccviii, 4; ccxxvii, 18.

² Eck und Böhme, *Deutscher Liederhort*, pp. 38, 381, 397, etc.

³ Cf. *Mittelhochdeutsche Minnereden*, I, herausg. von K. Matthaei (*Deutsche Texte des Mittelalters*, xxiv), 12, 9 and 13, 317.

⁴ Cf. Wackernagel, *Kirchenlieder*, III, p. 288.

⁵ *Die mitteldeutsche poetische Paraphrase des Buches Hiob*. T. E. Karsten (same series, xxi), p. 27, ll. 1693-7.

⁶ Further reference might be made to Dittfurth, *Volks- und Gesellschaftslieder aus dem 16. und 17. Jahrh.*, e.g., No. 39, Ade; Uhland's *Volkslieder*, 54, 55, 57, 58; *Des Knaben Wunderhorn*, I, 289, etc.

Another tendency of the poet may be noticed, viz. the frequency with which he accentuates the personal pronoun immediately preceding the verb, especially at the beginning of a line.

1. Ich kam ín des máyENZEÍt
11. Ich mocht[és] nit lénnger lán
Ich muest ín den ánger gán
131. Ich stuend aúf und wóllt von dán, etc.

On the other hand in many lines we find an ‘Auftakt’ of two syllables; cf. lls. 30, 46, 68, 94, 154, 157.

The rhymes are in general pure, and those which do not appear so can be accounted for by the dialect in which the poem is written, viz. that of Bavarian Austria. Characteristic also of this dialect is the strong tendency to apocope and syncope which marks many of the rhymes. Cf. erblickt (pret.): geschickt (p.p.); trawret: mawret (63–64); pawm (dat.): anschawn (71–72); ticht: nicht (123–4); erwent (=erwendet): end (35–36), etc.

To the same dialect we may ascribe the following peculiarities in the rhymes:

- (1) Vowels â: a, cf. dann: hân 131–2; gäch: sach 13–14; statt: gât 157–8¹.

ê: ë (before r), cf. her: mehr 79–80; er: her 135–6².

ei (>ī): ei (>ei), cf. schein: rein 9–10; rubein: rein 29–30³.

ai (>ei): ai (>age), cf. lait: gesait 125–6⁴.

- (2) Consonants m: n, cf. pawm: schawn 71–2.

z: s, cf. baz: gras 43–4.

w: b, cf. tau: laub 57–8⁵.

Difference of final t, cf. tall: manigfalt 3–4.

Other characteristic forms are: ‘west,’ l. 84⁶; in the inner part of the line, the preterite ‘hiet’ (from hân), l. 29, and the construction of ‘vor’ with the genitive, ll. 66, 100 and 145⁷. These forms, together with those noticed under the vowels and consonants, are sufficient to indicate the home of the original.

It only remains to say that a complete reconstruction of the text is impossible as the ‘Überlieferung’ of the poem is far from perfect.

¹ Cf. Weinhold, *Bairische Grammatik*, § 36.

² *Ib.* § 48.

³ Cf. Zwierzina, *Z. f. d. A.*, XLIV, p. 393.

⁴ *Ib.* p. 363.

⁵ For m: n and w: b, cf. Weinhold, *loc. cit.*, §§ 125 and 169.

⁶ Weinhold, *Mhd. Grammatik*, § 419.

⁷ Cf. Zwierzina, *loc. cit.*, p. 27.

Several of the lines appear to me to be clearly interpolations and they have therefore been relegated to the notes. Smaller interpolations consisting of a word or syllable have been enclosed in round brackets. Additions made to the text are denoted throughout by square brackets.

VON DEM BLÜMLEIN VERGISSMEINNICHT.

Ich kam in des mayenzeit
 auf ainen grünen anger weit,
 der stund in ainem tiefen tall:
 da sach ich plüemen manigfalt
 gegen der liechten sunne[n] prehen. 5
 Ich gedacht: 'ich mües (die) ansehen,
 wie der may sey getziert
 und jeglichs bluem[e]lein formiert.'
 gegen des liechten mayen schein
 die blümlein waren liecht und rein. 10
 Ich mocht[es] nit lennger lan,
 ich muest in den anger gan:
 (und) zu den plumen was mir gach;
 manigs hubsch plümlein ich da sach
 sich auftun gen der sunnen 15
 in frewden und in wunnen.
 Doch sunderlich ich ains erblickt,
 das was gar lieblich geschickt;
 darauf lag ain trop[e]flein
 von tau als wär es rein perlein¹, 20
 es² het sich lieblich geschmuckt³
 und zartlich auf sein kraut getruckt
 und pflag da senfter morgenrue,
 ich trat ain wenig bas hintzue.
 Da ich das [bluemlein] ansach 25
 gruenes gras was sein ob(e)dach,
 es⁴ was plab als der safier rein,

¹ The MS. has not been strictly adhered to in this passage, as the sense rendered a transposition of the lines necessary. Lines 21 and 22 in the MS. have become ll. 25 and 26 in the printed text. The two following lines which follow l. 26 in the MS. seem to me to be an interpolation:

Da sach ich pluemen manigfalt
 Sunder merkt ich aines bluemlein gestalt.

² MS. das bluemlein.

³ MS. geschnuckt.

⁴ MS. das.

teuf darin stuend ain rubein¹,
 den man lieblich hiet paliert:
 also was das bluemlein geformiert. 30
 Mitten ain das was rein gell.
 Mit der hannd was ich snell,
 ich naigt mich dar und prach es ab;
 ich gedacht: ‘seit ich[s] nun hab,
 niemand mich des erwent, 35
 Ich will sein komen an ain end,
 ob mir jemand [kumt] entgagen,
 der mir kund[e]...sagen,
 wie das pluemlein sey genant,
 das ich da hab in meiner hand.’ 40
 Ich ging [ain wenig]² fur mich bas
 durch feyel und[e] gruenes gras,
 und kam auf ainen smalen steig.
 Ich gedacht in meinem müt: ‘nu schweig!
 Nu will ich gen als lanng und vil, 45
 ob ich kom des anders an ain ziel,
 ob mir jemand tät bekant,
 wie das blüemlein wär genant.
 Der steig mich trug durch ain wild(es) hag,
 vor dem ain schöner gart[e] lag, 50
 da sach ich erst den mayenglantz³.
 Die pawne⁴ waren voll⁵ blued[e] gantz,
 die fogel sungen in den (gruenen) esten
 gen der liechten su[n]nen glesten;
 keines ward nie nas von tau, 55
 si sassen in dem gruenen laub
 und wurden also lustlich singn
 und mit suessem sang[e] klingen,
 das ich es nit verloben kan.
 Jeglicher vogel der hueb an 60
 mit seinem besundern gesanck,
 das es under ainander klanck.
 Ich horte niemand, der da trawret.
 Der gart[e] was schon umb[e]mawret;

¹ MS. das stuend tief in ainem rubein
 das was plab als der saffer rein.

² Cf. l. 65.

⁴ pawn.

³ mayengantz.

⁵ von.

ich ging ein wenig bas hinfur 65
 da sach ich vor mein aine thür¹;
 die was offen, ich gie hinein,
 da ersach ich aine frawen rein :
 da ich sie erst anblickt[e]
 von herzen ich erschrickt[e] 70
 und naigt mich hinder ainem pawm,
 ich wollt ihr schon haimlich anschawn.
 Da sie mich [erst] ersach,
 sie ging zu mir und[e] sprach :
 'Gotwilkum gesell was schafstu hie ?' 75
 Ich naigt mich nider auf ain knie
 und zuckt meinen hüt ab.
 Sie sprach : 'setz auf, lieber knab,
 was schafst hie oder wannen kumst her,
 wann ich in manig zeit nie mehr 80
 kainen alls gern hab gesehen,
 das müess ich in warheit jehn.'
 Ich sprach:] 'frau, ich gen irr und han geprest,
 genad, frau, wann ich gern[e] west,
 wie das bluemlein wär genant, 85
 das ich hie hab in meiner hant;
 wist ir nit des bluemleins kraft ?
 durch² aller frauen gesellschaft
 und durch ewr er und tugend
 erfreu[e]t mir mein herz und jugend, 90
 und tuet mir das bluemlein nennen
 oder was ich dabey sull erkennen.'
 Sy sprach gar tugendlich : 'das soll sein³.
 setz dich nyder, auf die trewe mein
 so will ich dir es thün bekantt.' 95
 Sy graif mir her nach mein[er] hant
 und zoch mich zu ir sitzen nider;
 ich wischt balld auf von ir wider :
 'Nain frau, ich will tugendlich⁴
 sten vor ewr als ist billich.' 100
 Sy sprach : 'du sollt sitzen zu mir,

¹ ain thor.² tuet es durch.³ gesell das soll sein.⁴ MS.

Nain frau tugendlich.

Ich will sten vor ewr als billich ist.

so will ich das beschaiden dir,
 des du hast gefrag[e]t mich ;
 nu wol her und setz[e] dich.’
 Also setz[t] ich mich zu derselben stund, 105
 da sprach sy aus irem rotten mund :
 ‘ Vergissmeinnit ist es genant
 und ist frawen (und mannen) wol erkannt,
 die da tragen stätikaît.
 Vergissmeinnit bringt (oft) lieb und laid. 110
 Wann lebt yender ain fraw so gut,
 die da tregt vessten stätten mütt,
 haltt sy das bluemlein in ir(e)m hertzn,
 Ir tüt senen haimlich(en) schmerztn,
 und pflegt sy das blüemlein eben und schon 115
 so hat sy (oft) frewd widerumb zu lon,
 und gutten mut in haimlichait ;
 Vergissmeinnit bringt (oft) lieb und laid,
 vergissmeinnit die edel(e)¹ frucht,
 wer ir newst, der hat (die) sehnsucht 120
 und hat haimlich wol und ach
 und grämlichen² ungemach.
 Was man auch syngt oder ticht,
 dabei mües sein vergissmeinnicht :
 also bringt es lieb und laid. 125
 Von dem blüemlein hab ich dir nu gesagt.’
 Ich sprach : ‘ gnad, frau, ich hab zu danck(e)n
 mit gantzen trewen on alles wanckn,
 das ir mir trewlich habt gesagt
 was ich ew...hab gefragt.’ 130
 Ich stuend auf und wollt von dann :
 ‘ Genad, fraw, lat mich urlaub han.’
 Sy sprach : ‘ gesell nu beit,
 du kumst noch [zue] gutter zeit.’
 Ich sprach : ‘ nein [frau], zeit hat er.’ 135
 Sy graif mich nach dem arm[e] her.
 ‘ Gesell³, merck, was ich dir ratn will :
 gib allen frewden ein schnelles ziel,
 gedenck, ein widerkern tüt gar woll.

¹ ist ain edele.² gämlichen.³ und sprach : gesell, etc.

Bis fest, stät und sprich frawen wol, 140
 bis verschwigen trau niemand zu vil.
 'Genad frau, gern ich es tûn will.'
 'Nun will ich dich nit leñger halten¹,
 Gott mües deiner fart walltn.'
 Sy gie vor mein hinfur 145
 und wartet meiner bei der thür².
 Also schied ich von der zarten,
 sy tett mir selbst auf den garten
 und gab mir lieblich disen segen :
 'Gott mües dein[er] ymer pflegen 150
 und[e] haben in seiner pflicht.
 Mein hort, halt dich des (bluemlein) vergissmeinnicht.'
 Ich sprach : 'furwar, fraw, das soll sein
 unvergessen (ewicklich) in dem herzen mein.'
 Sy sprach:] 'Vergissmeinnit, das edel pluemlein, 155
 pflanz (mir) in den garten des hertzen dein,
 und der zawn, der umb den garten gatt,
 soll sein ³nitliebers an aller statt.'

JESSIE CROSLAND.

LONDON.

¹ aufhalten.² After l. 146 in the MS. stand the following lines which seem to me to be an interpolation:

Ich gund hinder der thur still stan
 Sy sprach wiltu nit furbas gan
 Nain fraw ir muest belieben hie
 Sy sprach sag mir allswie
 Gee fur dich es ist dir umsunst
 Ich tue in meinem gartn wes mich verlust.

³ nitliebers und vergissmeinnit.